

Chesterton Explains How and Why Mr. Ford Misunder- stood the War

The English Publicist Wants
to Know What Americans
Would Have Said If an Eng-
lish Owner of Hansom Cabs
Tried to Stop Our Civil War.

By G. K. Chesterton
the Distinguished Publicist.

MR. FORD, the celebrated American comedian, is now on tour with his company, and the type of advertisement, as well as the troupe itself, is much in the manner of Mr. Barnum. How, happily, the humorist manages to keep his inventions remote from any too painful reality may be judged from the following remark, which he is reported as having made to an interviewer: "I believe that the sinking of the Lusitania was deliberately planned to get this country into war. It was not planned by any one nation. It was planned by the financiers of war."

I think that is quite sufficient as regards Mr. Ford in relation to the probabilities of politics. There seems no limit to such a line of thought, and I am surprised that he has not carried it further. I have often denounced the internationalism of finance myself; I believe that banks are often really the fortresses of a silent invasion. But I have some difficulty in believing that bankers swim under the sea to out holes in the bottoms of ships; I presume Mr. Ford thinks that several millions of bank clerks, disguised as German soldiers, crossed the frontier and laid waste Belgium, while the peaceable German army remained at home.

It may be that by "financiers" Mr. Ford means munition-manufacturers, for his style is by no means clear; and I myself have often pointed out that the German firm is Krupp and Kaiser, and not Kaiser and Krupp. But the attempt to explain the collision of all human ambitions and interests by the mere materials through which they work is a thing fit for a lunatic asylum. I could not make Mr. Ford commit a murder by giving him a revolver as a Christmas present; even if, in the warmth of my affection, I had made it for him myself. Nor could anybody make thousands of ordinary men march and starve and die happy, merely by providing them with pieces of metal for the purpose. Nobody could make them carry heavy rifles by making heavy rifles for them to carry. The whole thing is windy nonsense born of wealth and security and a gaping and ghastly ignorance of all that makes men behave like men.

That pride and ambition and avarice often lead to wars is true, and another matter; but that has nothing to do with the mindless materialism which would explain things by their tools. Torture, for instance, is a horrible thing; and real religious enthusiasts have often tortured each other. But if any man were to tell me that they tortured each other because the manufacturers of instruments of torture wanted to sell them, I should take the liberty of calling him a fool. I do not believe that the Reformation came because shopkeepers wished to do a brisk business in racks. Nor do I believe that the epidemic of witch-burning in the seventeenth century was due to a conspiracy of timber-merchants. People wanted to fight under such insult and wrong as the ultimatums to Serbia and Belgium long before there were any modern armaments or modern armament firms. I have sometimes even fancied that people wished to travel before the invention of the Ford car.

There is one way in which Mr. Ford and his tour will probably do good. It will clear the pitch of much more plausible and presentable individuals if they attempt to prevent the thorough purgation of Christendom. There are other pacifists, many of them men who necessarily command respect, who may attempt to create the reconciliation without understanding the quarrel. Such men will mean nothing but good and do nothing but harm; but they will certainly do less harm if they find, wherever they go, the torn and faded posters of Mr. Ford's unsuccessful circus.

I have been told (I do not know whether there is any truth in it) that during American elections the opponents of some politician will send round a sort of living caricature of him; another man dressed up in undignified imitation of him, and carrying on (I need hardly say) in a manner little to his credit. These artistic wire-pullers send their walking-caricature not after the hated politician to parody him, but before him, to take the words out of his mouth. So that astonished statesman finds his most sober remarks belied with happy laughter.

I do not suggest that we should apply this method to the pacifists ourselves; or attempt to forestall Mr. Morel or Mr. Philip Snowden by sending some funnier person in front of them. For one thing, I do not see how there could be any funnier person than Mr. Morel or Mr. Philip Snowden. And for another, such jokes in the grand style require the champagne-like air which seems to serve that nation (symbolically called Carle Nation) as a substitute for champagne. But if it is difficult for us to do it ourselves, we ought to be all the more grateful to Mr. Ford if he will do it for us. And I cannot imagine anything more likely to turn a premature peace into a permanent joke than a man who begins his persuasion of the world by telling us a story about the sinking of the Lusitania, by which the Prussian Government defended what it did not do.

For the responsible pacifists in America, the

The Irresistible Call of the "Higher Command"

Rev. Dr. Campbell Explains the Mystery of Why
Men Leave Homes, Happiness and Safety Willingly
to Face Death or Suffering on the Battlefield

By Rev. Reginald J. Campbell
the Most Noted English Preacher.

HERE is a coincidence worth telling about. I was just sitting down to write an article with the title of "The Higher Command" when a letter came in containing the following story told on the authority of one of our wounded Australian heroes.

He says the bravest man he ever saw was a Wesleyan military chaplain. He was on one of the barges which were landing men from our troopships at the Dardanelles.

A man was shot down. The chaplain made to dash to the rescue and bring the wounded soldier back to safety, but a Catholic priest standing near grabbed hold of him, saying, "You mustn't think of it. It is madness. You are going to certain death."

The Wesleyan shook off the restraining hand, replying, "I have got my orders, and they come from a higher command than yours, and I'm going." He went, and was struck by a bullet while in the act of beginning his work of mercy.

Instantly the priest sprang after him, but the officer in charge of the landing party called out, "Stay where you are. I forbid your going. We are losing too many men." The priest calmly went on, only turning his head to say as he passed, "Did you not hear what my Wesleyan comrade said? I, too, have got my orders—from the higher command."

Within a few moments he lay dead beside his brother of the cross.

Reckless Men Who
Became Religious in War.

This is a fine story, only one of many similar stories that one is hearing on every hand and most of which will never be printed. It is amazing how splendid men can be, and women, too, under the stress of a great demand such as the present hour is making upon us all.

The Prime Minister told us recently that before the war we did not know we possessed so much of this wonderful moral quality in the nation and the empire. I confess I did not, and most of those with whom I have talked about it agree that they did not either. We all wondered, everybody wondered, whether the Briton of to-day, at home or overseas, had quite the grit of his ancestors. It only needed a great world crisis to show it, and here it is as of yore.

But the thing I am thinking most of at the moment in connection with it is the strange, compelling power possessed by this inner imperative, this higher command, that makes ordinary everyday folk capable of such mighty deeds. Where does it come from and what is it? It is a queer thing, this higher command, and it takes the most curious forms.

A reckless, devil-may-care sailor is taken prisoner by dervishes and told that he may save his life by forswearing Christianity and becoming convert to Islam. He says he will see them blown first, and die a martyr to the faith he has never greatly honored by his life. Now, why on earth should a man do that? He might very well shelter himself under the plea of necessity and bide his time. But no, he will have no truck with the alternative. Something inside him will not let him, something whose condemnation he is much more afraid of than he is of death.

Touching Story of
a Lancashire Soldier.

I have just been talking to a wounded private soldier lying in a tent hospital. He is only a boy, and a delicate boy at that. Here he is, after seven months in the trenches, smashed up for life, if he ever succeeds in getting well, which I doubt, and the busy, kindly military doctors and nurses doubt, too.

He comes from Lancashire—Wigan, I think he said—and he looks it even if his speech did not betray him, such a strong face he has and such an independent, manly mode of address.

He worked in an iron foundry, but has never earned good wages. His health has been partly to blame for that, but circumstances have been to blame also. He is rather resentful about it, and curses our unjust social system with all his might. Undoubtedly it has been hard on him. He has known little but struggle and dull drudgery all his days. Even starvation has threatened him more than once.

He does not remember his father. His mother was early left a widow with a young family to bring up, and would naturally share it as so many intrepid women similarly placed have had to do and will have to do still more when war has taken its toll complete. He seems to have no thought now but for his mother, whereby I can guess what kind of mother she must have been—"mutter" he calls her, in his broad Lancashire dialect, or the nearest approach I can make to it with the pen.

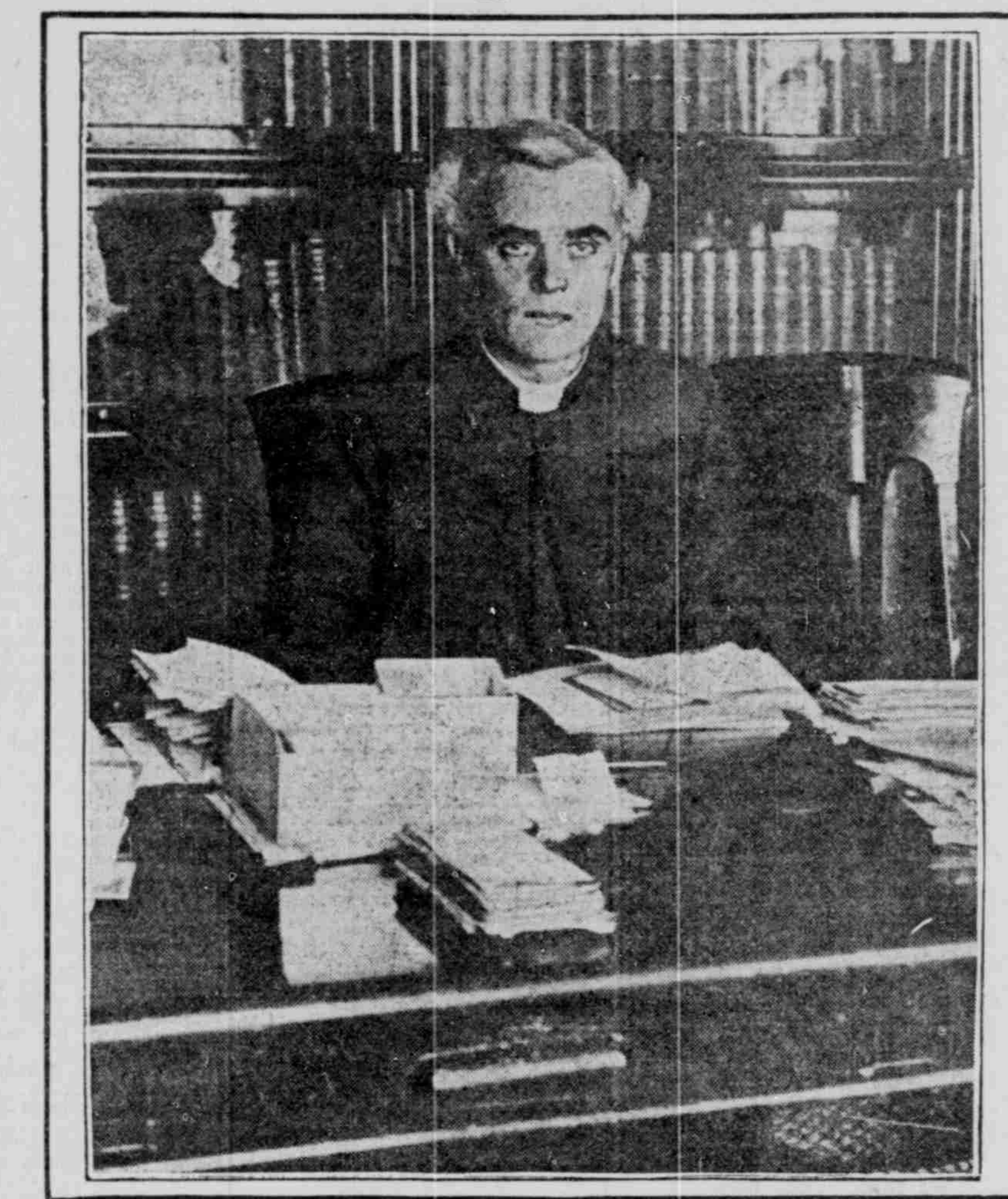
He wishes she wouldn't "mutter." He will be "aw reet." That he will, however, it goes. Poor mother! She has another lad, he says, lying in a bloody grave somewhere on the Belgian frontier, and there are no more left now to look after her as good sons should—only daughters, one of them a permanent invalid, to weep with her and battle on alone.

He would like to get better because of this, but has got "if person" to write and cheer her up and tell her it will be "aw reet" anyhow. And then he falls to talking with extraordinary bitterness of the totally unnecessary hardships of the lot of the toiling poor at home in England—foolish, luxurious, pleasure-loving, ill-directed, scrambling, shambling England.

He is an intelligent youth, and knows what

misery which I would ask them to consider is this. They must not be surprised if it takes a long time and a terrible agony to tear up from the earth what we are trying to tear up for it is the whole European evil, from which we have increasingly suffered for two hundred years. The American democracy is to be congratulated on having been founded far away from us, and when that evil was only beginning to grow. But for the very reason that America is to be congratulated on escaping it, America is not specially qualified to understand it.

It is a natural temptation for Americans to tell us how to solve the problem of militarism; just as it was a natural temptation for us to tell them how to solve the problem of negro



Rev. Dr. Reginald J. Campbell.

he is talking about. He has read a good deal and thought more, and takes a fairly active part in local labor politics, or did before the war. Religion he appears to have left mostly to "mutter."

Here again I am filled with wonder and respect. I ask myself what England has ever done for this young fellow that he should leave his mother to suffer and mourn while he goes to fight and die for motherland? Or is it something else of which motherland is but the most convenient symbol?

I don't think he knows himself, although he is under no illusions about the course he has chosen.

I put the question to him. "Well, ye see," he answers slowly, "it's a man's job. A man canna sink and hide when there's a job of this sort going." He could give no further explanation.

Here were two commands, two ideals if you like, mutually incompatible. One, very much more than the other, was exceedingly dangerous and disagreeable. But he knew which he had to obey, and he knew without being able to give a very clear reason for his choice.

The Blighting, Terrifying
Menace of Prussianism.

Dimly apprehended, perhaps, was the knowledge that in fighting England's battle just now he was fighting for a greater than Wholesome, for all that is sweet, and dear, and wholesome in human lot, for the future of the entire race, for things better and more worthwhile than good wages and abundant leisure, or even the refinements of life that these can provide—for liberty, comradeship, democratic ideals, as opposed to Prussianism and all its blighting, terrifying menace.

Was that it? I cannot tell; I think so. But I feel also—nay, I am sure—that behind all this is a motive, an incentive, that never can be completely rationalized, a need-must, which has more of heaven than of earth in it. We may be willing to die for one thing to-day and another to-morrow, but it is always the same thing in the end, the Eternal Right.

We never know what it is, but it is always calling to us, always calling, and when we hear the summons, our dearest treasures drop up from under our hands, and we turn with averted men from the contemplation of our heart's desire to lift our gaze to the shining heights whereon a glory beckons that is not of earth alone. As Francis Thompson phrases it:

I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds:
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.

But not ere him who summoneth
I have seen, enshrouded
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-
crowned;

His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
In all of us there is this strange, mystical
susceptibility, call it what you will, this urge
to lay all we have and are upon the altar of the

slavery. But the greater part of what we talked about negro slavery was nonsense. It was full of that frailty in the mind by which men can always be most emphatic about what is furthest off.

Emancipation would have seemed a very easy matter to Dickens or Thackeray; but it seemed a very difficult matter both to Lincoln and to Lee. And I think it will call a smile to the lips of the most earnest American pacifist, if he reflects on what welcome either Lincoln or Lee would have given to an English proprietor of hansom-cabs who should suddenly have commanded both sides to embrace, immediately after the Battle of Chancellorsville. And it is equally unnecessary for any American to go outside his own national history if he

ineffable ideal that we feel has the right to demand our uttermost. I know of nothing that so fully demonstrates man's spiritual nature. It is the one great fact that differentiates us from the brutes. All history through you find it running.

On the one hand you have man, selfish, greedy, earth-bound, cunning, false and sordid in his aims. On the other, at repeated intervals, in great and solemn hours, comes this austere appeal for all we have to give, and we promptly give it, joyously, willingly, without thought of reward, and derive a greater satisfaction from that self-giving than from all other kinds of gain put together. It is deep, mysterious, elusive, this stress of the spirit, but we all know it unmistakably as all generations have known it.

Soldiers Are Dying
for All Humanity.

Perhaps there is nothing so strong in human nature as this impulse to fling ourselves away at the bidding of we know not what, the something ever blessed that incarnates itself, now in this cause or objective, and now in that. Assuredly there is nothing so exalting within the totality of human experience. Show me the man or the nation without it, and I will show you man or nation damned and lost.

The lower command, the command of expediency and common sense, the command of conventionality and established order, or the dictate of self-love insists. "Be tranquil! remain secure! jeopardize nothing! disturb nobody! hold on with care to what you possess, take no risks!"

The higher command thrusts all prudentialism aside and cries, "Give me all. I will have nothing less."

It is madness to listen if we want to be safe, but we do listen and always will. And does the specific requirement through which the call comes even matter in itself? Hardly at all, I should think. What matters is our response.

Leonidas and his Spartans perish to a man at Thermopylae—for what? For King Constantine and the nation he rules to-day? No. It would have mattered little for hundreds of years past if the Greece they saved had been wiped off the map. They thought they were dying for Greece—and so they were, for the Greece of the moment, for the Greece from which we have inherited our ideals of the beautiful and gracious in life.

But if they were not dying for more than Greece their death was a tragedy unrelieved. They were dying for the soul of men, and to an extent they must have been conscious of it, dying for a world unborn and a greater world unseen. Upon their own triumph of soul they rose to the threshold of that which is beyond manhood as manhood is beyond the beast and the cloud. They achieved more than they understood or tried for. People have died before now for what, to our perceptions, was not worth a moment's discomfort, but we are wrong and they were right.

An ancient city is besieged, and the oracle

wishes for some image of the mind of the decent European who, desiring peace as much as any American, is yet at this moment absolutely adamant for war.

No American was more pacifist, as none was more Puritan, than James Russell Lowell. He was much too pacifist, as he was much too Puritan, for my own private fancy, and his lecturing voice was easily drowned for me in the great wind of Walt Whitman. In his earlier poems he preached a literal peace-at-any-price, in its most precise and even priggish form. He said that all war was murder, and that he had no need to go any further than his Testament for the fact.

He thought it the most scorching satire to suggest that civilization could get forward on

goes forth that the only way to save it is for the king's virgin daughter, or some one else of equal rank and worth, the best and fairest that the community can produce, to be offered in burnt sacrifice upon the walls. The girl consents and goes to her doom amid the awe-stricken prayers and blessings of the multitude of onlookers.

What gods were they that required this deed before they would interfere between these folk and their enemies without? None. The offering placated no blood-drinking deity; but it achieved its purpose all the same. The elevation of soul required in the one who willingly died for the rest was communicated more or less to them all, and forever. Who cares now whether the city fell or not?

When Edmond Campion, after being bruised and broken on the rack, was compelled to sit for three hours arguing intricate theological propositions with his Puritan judges before being dragged through the streets on a hurdle to be hanged at Tyburn, the martyr thought he was witnessing for the truth of God, the truth to which all Christendom would speedily return. Was he? He died like a hero. No man could have died better. But would it have been well for the world that the cause represented by the Inquisition and the Spanish Armada should have prevailed over that of Froisher and Drake? I trow not. Yet Campion died for England as surely as they died, for that spiritual England which has been slowly built up through the centuries, on the other side of death as on this may be, by the glorious self-devotion of her sons.

All Laws Overruled by
the "Higher Command."

There are clever men who tell us that the higher command is only a mode of what is commonly called conscience, and that conscience is only the survival in the individual of the instinct for social self-preservation. It has been found in generations past that some forms of action tend to social benefit. The former have social penalties attached to them and the latter social approval, so that in time everybody comes to feel that the one kind of act is blameworthy and the other praiseworthy—hence conscience.

But that will not do. It does not explain sufficiently. It does not explain why the social pioneer so often has to take a line in direct defiance of the accepted standards of his time. "Here stand I; I can none other" has been the testimony of many a reformer besides Luther. Expressed or implied, it is the testimony of them all.

The higher command I am writing about can scarcely be classed as conscience. It has affinities with it, but goes beyond it. Conscience warns or inhibits, marks this wrong and the other right, is concerned with "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not." But when the higher command comes in like a flood it swallows up, transmutes, sweeps away all merely moral maxims in its torrential course.

Right is comparatively seldom a clear issue. There is nearly always a conflict of duties apparent. But once let the higher command be heard, heard with that trumpet note in which all the world knows so well, and those scruples and balancings are forgotten. An exultant joy in losing everything, forsaking everything, crucifying everything dear to the natural man takes their place.

We no longer ask, Is this right or is this wrong? We overlook all such alternatives. We are plunged, merged, lost in the transcendental claim. We forget all else, or only remember it to consecrate it to the one high end. If we had a thousand lives they should all go the same way, and home, kindred, hearts beloved, all should follow with it.

Witness Serbia to-day, old men, sick men, women, girls, little children dying with arms in their hands. This is Serbia's hour of agony and glory. Her people are not merely being defeated. They are being exterminated.

They need not be, and at first sight one wonders why they should consent to be. All they have got to do is to throw down their arms and submit to the invader. They might have to suffer a little more, endure an ignominious subjection, but at least this tide of slaughter would be stayed.

And they will not. The world with parted lips and straining eyes beholds that they will not. Yet these very people not so long ago mean, ignorant, wandering, thieving, traders and pig-breeds. Any who have had to deal with them know they were no models of all the virtues. They could trifle with conscience, or silence it altogether with the best (or worst) of us.

All the Meanness
Turn Out of Men.

So it ever is. The higher command tears the meanness out of us like a tornado sweeping through a smelly township and hurling all its foulness away in a moment on the wings of the blast. It transforms our whole being—unless we deliberately close our ears and bury ourselves out of reach of its pealing summons.

You do not recognize these giants of the storm? They are the very men who yesterday shared your petty sins and pettier pleasures, these men who are to-day behaving like demigods, may have been hitherto touched by the meanness of the higher command, and all their little vices have dropped from them like withered leaves when the burst of Springtime comes. They have broken their fetters and clasped hands with the immortals.

a powder-cart. But he did not talk like that when he stood in the furnace of reality in which we stand to-day. And when other people began to talk like that to him, when the Fords of that day wanted a premature peace between North and South, he said something rather different, which I think, I can roughly remember:

"Come, Peace, not as a mourner bowed,
For honor lost and dear ones wasted,
But proud to meet a people proud,
With eyes that tell of triumph tasted . . .
Come, such as mothers prayed for when
They kissed their Cross with lips that quivered,
And bring fair wages for brave men,
A nation saved, a race delivered."